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UNCLAS VATICAN 005714

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT. FOR EUR/WE (MENNUTI); EUR/ERA, IO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PHUM VT

SUBJECT: SODANO HINTS AT SHIFT IN HOLY SEE UN STATUS; TAKES AIM AT PREEMPTIVE STRIKE, EU CONSTITUTION

¶1. (U) THE HOLY SEE IS CONSIDERING UPGRADING ITS STATUS AT THE UN FROM PERMANENT OBSERVER TO FULL MEMBER. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH CENTRIST ITALIAN DAILY "CORRIERE DELLA SERA" PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 24, VATICAN SECRETARY OF STATE (PM EQUIVALENT) CARDINAL ANGELO SODONO SAID THE HOLY SEE WAS UNCLASSIFIED

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STUDYING WAYS TO AUGMENT ITS PRESENCE AT THE UN. ASKED IF THIS MEANT BECOMING A FULL MEMBER, SODANO RESPONDED, "IF IT WOULD BE USEFUL, I'M NOT EXCLUDING IT." SODANO NOTED THAT SWITZERLAND HAD RECENTLY CHANGED ITS STATUS TO MEMBER AND THAT, "THE FORM OF OUR PRESENCE IS AN OPEN QUESTION."

¶2. (U) SODANO ALSO TOUCHED ON A POSSIBLE PREEMPTIVE STRIKE ON IRAQ SAYING THAT THE TERM DID NOT FEATURE IN THE UN'S VOCABULARY AND THAT DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATED SOLUTIONS SHOULD BE EXHAUSTED BEFORE ANY OTHER HYPOTHESIS IS PROPOSED.

¶3. (U) SODANO REAFFIRMED THE HOLY SEE'S DESIRE TO SEE CHRISTIANITY, AND RELIGION IN GENERAL, GIVEN A PLACE IN THE PROPOSED EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION (SEPTEL). HE SAID THE HOLY SEE EXPECTS EUROPE'S CHRISTIAN PATRIMONY TO BE MENTIONED IN ARTICLE 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION -- DEALING WITH EUROPEAN VALUES -- AND THAT A COMPLETELY NEW ARTICLE WOULD ENSHRINE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE RIGHT OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE TO SELF-GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATION.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: SODANO'S COMMENTS ON THE HOLY SEE'S STATUS AT THE UN REFLECT SOME INTERNAL FRUSTRATION ABOUT THE LIMITATIONS ON THE HOLY SEE'S VOICE IN INTERNATIONAL FORA ARISING FROM THEIR STATUS AS A PERMANENT OBSERVER. TRADITIONALLY, THE HOLY SEE HAS ENJOYED THE FREEDOM ITS UNIQUE STATUS OFFERS IT AS A VOICE WITHIN, BUT NOT OF, THE UN SYSTEM. WHILE A MORAL VOICE HAS SOME CLOUT, MANY VATICAN DIPLOMATS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT A VOTE -- ESPECIALLY IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND AFFILIATED UN AGENCIES -- MAY BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN PROMOTING THE HOLY SEE'S INTERNATIONAL AGENDA. FOR EXAMPLE, THE HOLY SEE'S OUTGOING FAO REPRESENTATIVE UNCLASSIFIED

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RECENTLY SUGGESTED IN AN "30 DAYS" ARTICLE IN CATHOLIC MONTHLY "30 DAYS" THAT THE HOLY SEE COULD HAVE BEEN MORE INFLUENTIAL IN COMBATING WORLD HUNGER IF IT WERE A VOTING MEMBER OF THE FAO. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THE ONGOING STRUGGLE OVER A GLOBAL BAN ON HUMAN CLONING HAS STRENGTHENED THE DEBATE ON THIS ISSUE WITHIN THE HOLY SEE. SWITZERLAND'S CHANGE OF STATUS HAS CLEARLY SPARKED SOME RECONSIDERATION WITHIN THE HOLY SEE AS TO WHETHER THE TIME IS RIGHT TO MAKE A SHIFT. WITH CURRENT UN PERMREP RENATO MARTINO RETURNING TO ROME AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS IN NEW YORK, THIS ISSUE IS LIKELY TO BE INTENSIVELY DEBATED IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. A DECISION TO UPGRADE WOULD MARK A SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURE IN THE HOLY SEE'S APPROACH TO PURSUIT OF ITS FOREIGN POLICY GOALS.

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